

1

**RIBBED BACKED PANELS****CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application does not claim the benefit of any earlier filings.

**BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

Exemplary embodiments relate generally to backed panels. Examples of panels that may benefit from exemplary embodiments include siding panels, wall panels, and other similar, suitable, or conventional types of panels. For instance, U.S. Pat. No. 6,321,500 is incorporated by reference in its entirety as one example of a backed panel that may benefit from the present invention.

In order to enhance the thermal insulation of building structures, it is known to provide one or more layers or panels of insulating material between a vinyl facing panel and a building structure. The backing may also improve the structural characteristics of the facing panel. Known insulated siding systems exist in many different forms. For instance, it is known to nail large sheets of insulating material to the building structure and then install the siding over the insulating material. Another system places a panel of insulation material in a slot behind the vinyl facing panel. Yet another system pours foam filler into the back of a vinyl facing panel such that the foam filler conforms to the geometry of the vinyl facing panel.

In certain applications, furring strips may be used when fastening vinyl siding to a wall or other surface. In some situations, especially in situations where there is an uneven or poor surface, oil canning may result when vinyl siding is applied thereto. General waviness is often a result of an uneven surface behind new siding. In many circumstances, furring strips are required to level a wall prior to siding installation, adding time and cost to the installation process. To install siding over existing hardboard or wood siding, furring strips must be used. In many circumstances, furring strips are typically 1" by 3" strips of wood that are nailed vertically every 12" to 16" around the entire surface where vinyl siding is applied to a building. The furring strips act as a flat surface to nail the vinyl siding thereto. In many applications, insulated sheathing is applied between each furring strip, further complicating and raising the cost of applying vinyl siding thereafter. Furthermore, furring strips may be currently required in certain locations and municipalities to acquire a desired capillary break between vinyl panels, once again, further complicating and raising the cost of applying vinyl siding.

A capillary break is in essence a gap to allow water that penetrates through the decorative cladding, in this example vinyl siding, to flow or evaporate eliminating the possibility of long term water damage to the structure. In known vinyl siding panels, the foam backer, which can be inserted behind vinyl siding or a layer in a composite assembly, does not have any or in some cases enough features to develop this requisite gap in the assembly. Consequently a number of regions within parts of Canada and the United States require the product be installed over furring strips in order to develop the necessary break.

In addition to the need for furring strips, moisture may accumulate behind a backed panel due to a variety of reasons including condensation and rain. The accumulation of moisture behind a backed panel may eventually lead to numerous

2

problems. For instance, prolonged exposure to moisture may cause damage to the backed panel including, but not limited to, delamination, deterioration, oil canning, and other types of moisture damage. Additionally, the accumulation of moisture may lead to the growth of mold, mildew, fungi, and other types of growth on the underlying structure and the backed panel. The moisture may even cause other types of damage to the underlying structure such as rotting, deterioration, and other types of moisture damage.

Exemplary embodiments may satisfy some or all of the aforementioned needs. For instance, exemplary embodiments may provide a drainage pathway, which may be comprised of at least one channel or groove, for a liquid on a surface of a backing portion of a paneling unit. In one example, a backing portion may include a plurality of drainage grooves or channels that may enable a liquid to drain. Optionally, at least one connector groove or channel may be provided that may intersect at least two drainage grooves or channels. As a result, an exemplary embodiment may optionally provide alternative drainage pathways in a system of connected drainage grooves or channels and connector grooves or channels.

Another exemplary embodiment of the present invention may include at least one rib. A rib may be included with or without at least one groove or channel. For example, a rib may be adjacent to a drainage groove or between adjacent drainage grooves. A rib may assist with liquid drainage. In addition, a rib may also enable ventilation behind the backing portion. Improved ventilation may help to prevent damage to the backing portion or an overall paneling unit. In addition, improved ventilation may help to prevent damage to an underlying structure such as may be caused by moisture. Furthermore, the ribs with or without drainage grooves may allow for water ventilation. Also, exemplary embodiments of vinyl siding panels may not require the use of furring strips to provide the requisite capillary break between current panels.

In particular, exemplary embodiments of composite siding panel assemblies may preclude the use of furring strips when installing vinyl siding or other suitable products because the ribs (i.e. standoffs) integrated with the backing portion may provide a gap between a base wall sheathing and a decorative cladding. This eliminates a major step in new construction vinyl siding installation and reduces labor content, installation time, and raw material costs, which are significantly higher if the contractor must use furring strips. Also, exemplary embodiments may be less prone to deflection given the ribs can be positioned as required to optimize the product. Exemplary embodiments may also fit into a standard accessory pocket, which is available to installers today, precluding the need to develop additional accessories to support this product.

In addition to the novel features and advantages mentioned above, other features and advantages of the present invention will be readily apparent from the following descriptions of the drawings and exemplary embodiments.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

FIG. 1 is a side elevation view of an assembly including a first exemplary embodiment of a backed siding unit that may be modified according to exemplary embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a side elevation view of the siding unit shown in FIG. 1.